

Module 2: the illustration or example essay



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Module 2: The Illustration or Example Essay By Camille Willingham, Communications and Humanities Faculty, Kennedy-King College Course English 101 — Composition I English 101 — Composition I, 3 semester hours

The goal of English 101 Composition I is the development of critical and analytical skills in reading and writing expository prose. The general objective is for students to learn strategic steps and the rhetorical devices and modes used in collegiate writing. The specific objective is for students to write a minimum of eight essays according to the basic rhetorical forms: narration, description, definition, example, process analysis, comparison/contrast, classification/division, cause/effect, and argumentation. For each writing assignment, students are expected to (1) select a manageable topic, (2) have a thesis statement that implies or states the essay's plan of development, and (3) construct at least three paragraphs that develop the thesis with concrete, relevant, and cohesive support, using transitional words, phrases, and sentences. They are also expected (4) to use good diction and correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation in 80% of the sentences. Prerequisite: Placement test or grade of C or better in English 100 or consent of department chairperson.

Camille Willingham,
773/602-5295 cwillingham@ccc.edu Kennedy-King College, 6800 S.

Wentworth Avenue, Chicago, IL 60621-3798 Description This module is designed to facilitate student fulfillment of specific objectives 2 and 3 of our 101 course syllabus. Unity, support, and coherence are the requisites for the effective collegiate essay in all rhetorical modes. The student examination of sample essays is an excellent way to master these concepts. Consequently, our modules propose to examine appropriate sample essays that

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demonstrate these requisites in each of the eight rhetorical forms. Our modules will enhance student understanding of the function of thesis, logical organization, topic sentences, supporting paragraph details, and transitional words in each of the sample essays. This exercise will reinforce the concepts of unity, support, and coherence required to effectively set forth and develop a point. Each sample professional essay taken from Langan (2001) is presented in four on-screen computerized exercises. Transferability The enhancement of critical and analytical skills in writing and reading expository prose is essential in all other English composition, developmental reading, and literature courses. It is, in fact, essential in all of the liberal arts that students have the skills to identify the main idea, major supporting points, and the effectiveness of those points when reading. It is equally important that students, when writing papers and exams, are capable of formulating an essay that has a clear thesis and coherent and adequately supported points. An on-screen computerized analysis of a sample professional essay in their discipline would be a reinforcement or refresher to what they have been taught in English 101.

Faculty Technology Skill - The ability to manage the Windows or Macintosh computer operating systems - The ability to use a wordprocessor (Microsoft Word, WordPerfect) - The ability to open, print, and close a file. - The ability to use a projector and computer for presentations

Student Technology Skill - Need to know how to use a word processor - Need to be able to open, print, save, and close a file - Need to have the skill to use a mouse to do basic formatting—to make bold, to underline, to make italics

Faculty Equipment - Individual computer with wordprocessor (Microsoft Word, WordPerfect) - LCD Projector (PC and/or Macintosh compatible) - Color Printer

Student Equipment - Individual PC with wordprocessor (Microsoft

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Word, WordPerfect) - Printer, b/w or color (optional) Improvement on Teaching and Learning The concept of a well-developed essay, centered around one controlling idea, and connected by logical transitions between sentences and paragraphs, is a difficult one for many community college students to master. This technological approach to sample essay analysis gives the student the opportunity to observe the essay on the screen and have the benefit of a classroom team approach to analysis. It encourages greater student involvement, and as an educational approach, it is far more engaging. Nontechnology Comparison Traditionally, study of the eight rhetorical modes has included student analysis of the appropriate sample essays as part of a homework assignment and then class textbook analysis of the essay to strengthen student understanding of the rhetorical modes. Students still need to study their sample essay and the theory of the rhetorical mode that it embodies before the class meeting. This teaching approach is much more engaging and interesting than the individual textbook approach because the student is no longer working as an individual in his or her own textbook, but as a part of a collaborative interactive classroom team in the essay analysis. Pertinent Issues Teachers need to be aware of . . . - Possible limitations on copyrighted commercial work. - The range of text-available Internet sites, fee and free sources (when model essays are used from sources other than the class textbook). - Built-in limitations of older word processing programs and printers. - Obstacles to learning presented by student lack of required computer skills. - The fact that the module exercises can be adapted to the Blackboard course management system. How to Use This Module in the Classroom It is imperative that a preliminary general discussion of rhetoric—the elements of <https://assignbuster.com/module-2-the-illustration-or-example-essay/>

the essay—precede any specific consideration of rhetorical mode. Therefore, prior to teaching each lesson on a specific rhetorical mode and the specific module given here to enhance that mode, the instructor must begin the 101 course and each unit of rhetorical mode—illustration, narration/description, process analysis, definition, division and classification, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, argumentation—with a review of the general elements of the essay. The initial units of the English 101 composition course should thoroughly cover general rhetorical theory. The chapters and exercises therein may be assigned for homework. The instructor may lecture on this rhetorical theory and as a classroom activity allow the students to orally review the chapter exercises. At the completion of this unit, the student should understand the following general rhetorical theory: -

Elements and Language of the Essay An essay is a relatively short piece of nonfiction in which a writer attempts to develop one or more closely related points or ideas. The thesis of an essay is its main idea. Sometimes, it is implied rather than directly stated. The thesis determines the content of the essay: everything the writer says must be logically related to the thesis statement. A good thesis statement identifies the topic and makes an assertion about it. A well-written essay should be unified; that is, everything in it should be related to its thesis, or main idea. There should be no digressions. A unified essay stays within the limits of its thesis. Your essay is unified if you advance a single point and stick to that point. If all the details in your essay relate to your thesis and supporting topic sentences, your essay is unified. An effective essay requires a good introduction or beginning and a good conclusion or ending. A good beginning should catch a reader's interest and then hold it. In addition to capturing your reader's attention, a

good beginning frequently introduces your thesis and either suggests or reveals the structure of the essay. The best beginning is the one most appropriate for the job you are trying to do. A conclusion may summarize; may inspire the reader to further thought or action; may return to the beginning by repeating key words, phrases, or ideas; or may surprise the reader by providing a particularly convincing example to support a thesis. The paragraph, like the essay, has its own main or controlling idea, often stated directly in a topic sentence. It should be unified, with every sentence relating to the main idea. Like the essay as a whole, the paragraph should be coherent with sentences and ideas arranged logically using appropriate transitional words. Moreover, like the essay, the paragraph requires adequate development—enough examples to convince the reader of the topic sentence. Transitions are words and phrases used to signal relationships between ideas in an essay and to join the various parts of an essay together. Writers use transitions to relate ideas within sentences, between sentences, and between paragraphs. The most common type of transition is the transitional expression, such as furthermore, consequently, similarly, granted, nevertheless, for instance, elsewhere, simply stated, finally, to conclude, and subsequently. Pronoun reference and repeated key words and phrases are the other important ways to make transitions. Good transitions enhance coherence: the quality of good writing when all sentences, paragraphs, and longer divisions of an essay are effectively and naturally connected.

should have gained the following understanding: The illustration essay uses examples to make ideas more concrete. Sometimes a single striking example suffices; sometimes a series of related examples is necessary. It is often called the example essay because it uses examples to support a particular point. These examples may be relevant facts, statistics, personal experiences, incidents, or stories. Now you may announce to your students, "To further enhance our understanding of this rhetorical mode, let us leave our textbook this class session and examine a model student essay that is not taken from our textbook" (Langan, 2001, p. 177). Exercise 1 First, let us look at scrambled sentences from a paragraph of this essay and unscramble them to test our understanding of logical organization. I witness the little cruelties that people inflict on each other. Last week, I found myself worrying less about problems of world politics and national crime and more about smaller evils. On this particular day, I had seen too much of the cruelty of the world. I came home one day with a bad taste in my mouth, the kind I get whenever I witness the little cruelties that people inflict on each other.

Exercise 2 Now, let us look at these scrambled paragraphs, which appear out of their correct order in the essay, and match them to their appropriate topic sentences. In addition, in orange, let us underline any sentences that do not advance the topic and thereby violate paragraph unity. This exercise enhances our understanding of paragraph unity and support. Paragraphs As I walked to the bus stop, I approached an old woman huddled in a doorway. She was wrapped in a dirty blanket and clutched a cheap vinyl bag packed with her belongings. She was one of the "street people" our society leaves to fend for themselves. Approaching the woman from the opposite direction were three teenagers who were laughing and talking in loud voices. When

they saw the old woman, they began to shout crude remarks at her. Then they did even more cruel things to torment her. The woman stared helplessly at them, like a wounded animal surrounded by hunters. Then, having had their fun, the teenagers went on their way. Topic Sentences At lunchtime on Wednesday, I witnessed more meanness. Along with dozens of other hungry, hurried The worst incident of mean-spiritedness people, I was waiting in line at that I saw that day happened after I left McDonald's. Also in line was a young work. mother with two tired, impatient children clinging to her legs. The mother was trying to calm the children, but it was obvious that their whining was about to give way to full-fledged tantrums. The lines barely moved, and the lunchtime tension was building. Then, one of the children began to cry and scream. As people stared angrily at the helpless mother, the little boy's bloodcurdling yells resounded through the restaurant. Finally, one man turned to her and said, " Lady, you shouldn't bring your kids to a public place if you can't control them." A young woman chimed in with another piece of cruel criticism. The mother was exhausted and hungry. Someone in line could have helped her by kneeling down to interact on eye level with one of the kids. Instead, even though many of the customers in the restaurant were parents themselves, they treated her like a criminal. one of the kids. Instead, even though many of the customers in the restaurant were parents themselves, they treated her like a criminal. Exercise 3 For another exercise in logical organization, let us look at the scrambled five paragraphs of this essay and put them into logical order. Scrambled Paragraphs I had seen enough of the world's coldness that day and wanted to leave it all behind. At home, I huddled in the warmth of my family. I wondered why we all contribute to the supply of petty cruelty. There's enough of it already.

Every day I walk from the bus stop to the office where I work. This walk is my first step away from the comforts of home and into the tensions of the city. For me, a landmark on the route is a tiny patch of ground that was once strewn with rubbish and broken glass. The city is trying to make a "pocket park" out of it by planting trees and flowers. Every day this spring, I watched the skinny saplings put out tiny leaves. When I walked past, I always noted how big the tulips were getting and made bets with myself on when they would bloom. To pass time as I walk, I often make silly little bets with myself, such as predicting that the next man I see will be wearing a blue tie. But last Wednesday, as I reached the park, I felt sick. Someone had knocked the trees to the ground and trampled the budding tulips into the dirt. Someone had destroyed a bit of beauty for no reason. Logical Order The worst incident of mean-spiritedness that I saw that day happened after I left work. As I walked to the bus stop, I approached an old woman huddled in a doorway. She was wrapped in a dirty blanket and clutched a cheap vinyl bag packed with her belongings. She was one of the "street people" our society leaves to fend for themselves. Approaching the woman from the opposite direction were three teenagers who were laughing and talking in loud voices. When they saw the old woman, they began to shout crude remarks at her. Then they did even more cruel things to torment her. The woman stared helplessly at them, like a wounded animal surrounded by hunters. Then, having had their fun, the teenagers went on their way. Last week, I found myself worrying less about problems of world politics and national crime and more about smaller evils. I came home one day with a bad taste in my mouth, the kind I get whenever I witness the little cruelties that people inflict on each other. On this particular day, I had seen too much of the cruelty of the world.

Exercise 4 Now, let us look at this sample for the last time and better perceive the logic and coherence of essay organization by drawing a red line under the thesis or main idea; a blue line under the topic sentences in the body, which support that thesis or main idea; and a green line under the transition words that enhance coherence between these paragraphs.

Everyday Cruelty Last week, I found myself worrying less about problems of world politics and national crime and more about smaller evils. I came home one day with a bad taste in my mouth, the kind I get whenever I witness the little cruelties that people inflict on each other. On this particular day, I had seen too much of the cruelty of the world. Every day I walk from the bus stop to the office where I work. This walk is my first step away from the comforts of home and into the tensions of the city. For me, a landmark on the route is a tiny patch of ground that was once strewn with rubbish and broken glass. The city is trying to make a "pocket park" out of it by planting trees and flowers. Every day this spring, I watched the skinny saplings put out tiny leaves. When I walked past, I always noted how big the tulips were getting and made bets with myself on when they would bloom. To pass time as I walk, I often make silly little bets with myself, such as predicting that the next man I see will be wearing a blue tie. But last Wednesday, as I reached the park, I felt sick. Someone had knocked the trees to the ground and trampled the budding tulips into the dirt. Someone had destroyed a bit of beauty for no reason. At lunchtime on Wednesday, I witnessed more meanness. Along with dozens of other hungry, hurried people, I was waiting in line at McDonald's. Also in line was a young mother with two tired, impatient children clinging to her legs. The mother was trying to calm the children, but it was obvious that their whining was about to give way to full-

fledged tantrums. The lines barely moved, and the lunchtime tension was building. Then, one of the children began to cry and scream. As people stared angrily at the helpless mother, the little boy's bloodcurdling yells resounded through the restaurant. Finally, one man turned to her and said, "Lady, you shouldn't bring your kids to a public place if you can't control them." A young woman chimed in with another piece of cruel criticism. The mother was exhausted and hungry. Someone in line could have helped her by kneeling down to interact on eye level with one of the kids. Instead, even though many of the customers in the restaurant were parents themselves, they treated her like a criminal. The worst incident of mean-spiritedness that I saw that day happened after I left work. As I walked to the bus stop, I approached an old woman huddled in a doorway. She was wrapped in a dirty blanket and clutched a cheap vinyl bag packed with her belongings. She was one of the "street people" our society leaves to fend for themselves. Approaching the woman from the opposite direction were three teenagers who were laughing and talking in loud voices. When they saw the old woman, they began to shout crude remarks at her. Then, they did even more cruel things to torment her. The woman stared helplessly at them, like a wounded animal surrounded by hunters. Then, having had their fun, the teenagers went on their way. I had seen enough of the world's coldness that day and wanted to leave it all behind. At home, I huddled in the warmth of my family. I wondered why we all contribute to the supply of petty cruelty. There's enough of it already.

Recommendation for Assessment It is highly recommended that instructors using this module assess learning by selecting a model essay from a source other than the student textbook. Reference

Langan, J. (2001). College writing skills with readings. New York: McGraw-Hill.

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